

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
OPPOSITION TO L.D. 970**

An Act to Eliminate Funding to Reduce Deer Predation

PRESENTED BY: Representative DICKERSON of Rockland

COSPONSORED BY: CHAPMAN of Brooksville, GATTINE of Westbrook, HARLOW of Portland, KUSIAK of Fairfield, PARRY of Arundel, PRINGLE of Windham, RYKERSON of Kittery, WELSH of Rockport.

DATE OF HEARING: April 23, 2013

Good afternoon Senator Dutremble, Representative Shaw and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Jim Connolly, Wildlife Division Director at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking in opposition to **L.D. 970**.

L.D. 970 would eliminate \$100,000 in funding from the Bureau of Resource Management with the intent of eliminating funding for the Deer Predation program.

In 2011 the 125th Maine Legislature passed LD 1569 which became law in Chapter 381 creating the Predator Control and Deer Habitat Fund. This fund gives members of the public an opportunity to donate funds for “predator control and to enhance deer habitat”. In Section 7 of that same statute, the Legislature directed the Department in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture Conservation and Forestry to develop and implement a plan for all state-owned lands to control predation on deer as well as a plan to protect, manage and enhance deer wintering areas. Section 10 directs the Department to develop and implement a program to control predation on deer if funding is available. Based on this statute it is clear the Department has been directed to conduct a predator control program focused on deer wintering areas. The public has contacted the Department on many occasions and asked to enact a predator control program. The funding has enabled the Department to put in place a focused program designed to address the issue of coyote predation on deer in Deer Wintering Areas in Northern, Eastern and Western Maine where severe winters and coyote predation have caused the deer herd to decline drastically. While LD 970, if enacted reduces the Department’s budget by the \$100,000, it does not eliminate funding for predator control. Without the use of license revenues the Department’s Predator Control Program would potentially be limited to the funding in the newly established Predator Control and Deer Habitat Fund and by the voluntary

efforts of hunters and trappers. The Department is prepared to operate the program as guided by the Legislature in law and with the funding provided.

I would be glad to answer any questions at this time or during the work session.